

The IDF's War Crimes Are a Perfect Reflection of Israeli Society, by Chris Hedges - The Unz Review

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Miko Peled, author and former member of IDF Special Forces, explains how Israel indoctrinates its citizens in anti-Palestinian racism from the cradle to the grave.

How Israel indoctrinates its people w/Miko Peled | The Chris Hedges Report



Three months into Israel's bombardment of Gaza, the atrocities the IDF has committed against Palestinians are too numerous to name. Israel is staging a prolonged assault on the Palestinian people's very means of existence—destroying homes, hospitals, sanitation infrastructure, food and water sources, schools, and more. To understand the genocidal campaign unfolding before our eyes, we must examine the roots of Israeli society. Israel is a settler colonial state whose existence depends on the elimination of Palestinians. Accordingly, Israel is a deeply militarized society whose citizens are raised in an environment of historical revisionism and indoctrination that whitewashes Israel's crimes while

cultivating a deep-seated racism against Palestinians. [Miko Peled](#), former IDF Special Forces and author of [*The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine*](#), joins *The Chris Hedges Report* for a frank conversation on the distortions of history and reality at the foundations of Israeli identity.

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TRANSCRIPT

The following is a rushed transcript and may contain errors. A proofread version will be made available as soon as possible.

Chris Hedges:

The Israeli army, known as the Israel Defense Force or IDF, is integral to understanding Israeli society. Nearly all Israelis do three years of military service, most continue to serve in the reserves until middle age. Its generals often retire to occupy senior positions in government and industry. The dominance of the military in Israeli society helps explain why war, militaristic nationalism, and violence are so deeply embedded in Zionist ideology.

Israel is the outgrowth of a militarized settler colonial movement that seeks its legitimacy in biblical myth. It has always sought to solve nearly every conflict; The ethnic cleansing and massacres against Palestinians known as the Nakba or catastrophe in the years between 1947 and 1949, the Suez War of 1956, the 1967 and 1973 wars with Arab neighbors, the two invasions of Lebanon, the Palestinian intifadas, and the series of military strikes on Gaza, including the most recent, with violence. The long campaign to occupy Palestinian land and ethnically cleanse Palestinians is rooted in the Zionist paramilitaries that formed the Israeli state and continues within the IDF.

The overriding goal of settler colonialism is the total conquest of Palestinian land. The few Israeli leaders who have sought to reign in the military, such as Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, have been pushed aside by the generals. The military setbacks suffered by Israel in the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria, and

during Israel's invasions of Lebanon only fuel the extreme nationalists who have abandoned all pretense of a liberal democracy. They speak in the open language of apartheid and genocide. These extremists were behind the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Israel's failure to live up to the Oslo Accords.

This extremism has now been exacerbated by the attack of October 7, which killed about 1,200 Israelis. The few Israelis who oppose this militaristic nationalism, especially after October 7, have been silenced and persecuted in Israel. Genocidal violence is almost exclusively the language Israeli leaders, and now Israeli citizens, use to speak to the Palestinians and the Arab world.

Joining me to discuss the role of the military in Israeli society is Miko Peled. Miko's father was a general in the Israeli army. Miko was a member of Israel's special forces, although disillusioned with the military, moved from his role as a combatant to that of a medic. After the 1982 war in Lebanon, he buried his service pin. He is the author of, *The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine and Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five*.

You grew up, you were a child when your father was a general in the IDF. This inculcation of that military ethos has begun very young and begun in the schools. Can you talk about that?

Miko Peled:

Sure, thanks for having me, Chris. It's good to be with you again and talk to you. So it begins before the military. It begins in preschool. It begins as soon as kids are able to talk and walk. I always say I knew the order of the ranks in the military before I knew my alphabet and this is true for many Israeli kids. The Israeli education system is such that it leads young Israelis to become soldiers and to serve the apartheid state and to serve in this genocidal state, which is the state of Israel. It's an enormous part of that. And with me, it came with mega-doses of that because when your father's a general, and particularly of that generation of the 1967 generals, they were like gods of the Olympus. Everybody knew their names.

On Independence Day, I remember in the schools you would have little flags, not just flags of Israel, but flags of the IDF with pictures of IDF generals, with pictures of military, all kinds of military symbols and so on. It's everywhere. When I was a kid they still had a military parade. It's everywhere and it's inescapable. And it's like you said, you hear it when you walk down the street, you hear it in the news, you hear it in conversations, you hear it in schools, you read it in the textbooks, and there's no place to develop dissent. There's no place to develop a sense that dissent is okay, that dissent is possible. And the few cases where people do become dissenters, it's either because their families have a tradition of being communist or more progressive and somehow it's part of their tradition but this is a minority of a minority. By and large, Israel stands with the army, and Israel is the army. You can't separate Israel from its army, from its military.

Chris Hedges:

Let's juxtapose the myth that you were taught in school about the IDF with the reality.

Miko Peled:

The myth that I was... Again, this was given to me in larger doses at home because my father and his comrades were all part of the 1948 mythology. We were small and we were resourceful, and we were clever, and therefore, in 1948, we were able to defeat these Arab armies and these Arab killers who came to try to kill us and so on and destroy our fledgling little Jewish state. And because of our heroism — And you talked about the biblical connection — Because we are the descendants of King David, and we are the descendants of the Maccabees, and we have this resourcefulness and strength in our genes, we were able to create a state and then every time they attacked, we were there. We were able to defend ourselves and prevail and so on. It's everywhere. Then again, in my case, it's every time the larger, more extended family got together or my parents got together with their friends. And in many cases, the fathers were also comrades in arms.

The stories of the battles, the stories of the conquests; Every city in Israel has an IDF plaza. Street names after different units of different generals are all over the country, street names of battles, so it's everywhere. It wasn't until I was probably 40 or a little less than 40, that it was the first time that I encountered the other narrative, the Palestinian story, and it was unbelievable. Somebody was telling me the day is night and night is day, or the world is flat, or whatever the comparison you want to make, it was incredible. They are telling me that what I know to be true 'cause I heard it in school and I read it in books, and I heard it from my father and from my mother and from friends, that all of this is not true. And what you find out if you go along the path that I chose to take, this journey of an Israeli to Palestine, is that it was one horrifying crime against humanity.

That's what this so-called heroism really was, it was no heroism at all. It was a well-trained, highly motivated, well-indoctrinated, well-armed militia which then became the IDF. But when it started, it was still a militia or today they would be called a terrorist organization, that went up against the people who had never had a military force, who never had a tank, who never had a warplane, who never prepared, even remotely, for battle or for an assault. Then you have to make a choice: How do you bridge this? The differences are not nuanced, the differences are enormous. The choice that I made is to investigate for myself and find out who's telling the truth and who isn't. And my side was not telling the truth.

Chris Hedges:

How did they explain incidents such as the Nakba, the massacres that took place in '48 and '56, the massive ethnic cleansing that took place in '67? How was that explained to you within that mythic narrative? Then I wonder if you could, because many of the activities as you mentioned that the IDF has had to carry out are quite brutal, quite savage, the killing, indiscriminate killing of civilians, we can talk about Gaza in a minute. What did that do to the society, the people who carried out those killings, and, of course, eventually huge prisons and torture and everything else. But let's begin with how the myth coped with those incidents and then talk about the trauma that is carried within Israeli society for carrying out those war crimes.

Miko Peled:

My generation, we knew that there were several instances of bad apples that committed terrible crimes. And we admitted, so there was Deir Yassin, which was a village on the outskirts of Jerusalem, a peaceful village where a horrible massacre took place. Then we knew that Ariel Sharon was a bit of a lunatic and he took the commandos that he commanded in the '50s and went to the West Bank and went into Gaza and committed acts of terrible massacres. He was still a hero, held in high regard by everyone, but we knew that there were certain instances... And every military, every nation makes its mistakes and then these things happen. But there was never any sense that this somehow discounted or hurt the image of us being a moral army.

There are lots of stories of how soldiers went and they decided to, out of the kindness of their heart, they didn't harm civilians. And those same civilians went and then warned the enemy that they were coming. And these same good Israeli soldiers would then pay the price and were killed. So it's presented as limited cases. Nakba was not something that was ever discussed. I'm sure it's not discussed today, certainly not in schools. In Israeli schools today, you're not allowed to mention the Nakba. There's a directive by the Ministry of Education that even Palestinians are not allowed to mention the Nakba. But nobody ever talked about that. And the Arabs left, what are you going to do? There was a war and all these people left and this is the way it is.

So none of that ever hurt, in any way, the image of us being this glorious heroic army, descendants of King David, and other great traditions of Jewish heroism, none of that ever, ever hurt itself. So there's no trauma because we did nothing wrong. If somebody did something wrong, well, it was a case of bad apples, it was limited to a particular circumstance, a particular person, a particular unit, and you get crazy people everywhere. What are you going to do? It's never been presented as systemic. Today, we have a history so we can look back and if we do pay attention, and if we do read the literature, and we do listen to Palestinians — And today there's this great NGO called Zochrot, which its mission is to maintain the memory of the towns and cities that were destroyed in 1948 and to revive the

stories of what took place in 1948 — They are uncovering new massacres all the time. Because as that generation is dying off, both the Israelis who committed the crimes and the Palestinians who were still alive at the time and survived, are opening up and telling more and more stories.

So we know of churches that were filled with civilians and were burned down. We know of a mosque in Lydd that was filled with people and a young man went and shot a Fiat missile into it. All of these horrific stories are still coming out but Israelis are not paying attention, Israelis are not listening. Whenever there's an attack on Gaza — And as you know very well, these attacks began in the fifties with Ariel Sharon, by the way — There was always a reason. Because at first they were infiltrators, and then they were terrorists, and now they're called Hamas, and whatever the devil's name may be there's always a very good reason to go in there because these are people who are raised to hate and kill and so on. So it's a tightly-knit and tightly-orchestrated narrative that is being perpetuated and Israelis don't seem to have a problem with that.

Chris Hedges:

And yet carrying out acts of brutality. The occupation — Huge numbers, a million Israelis are in the states. Large numbers of Israelis have left the country. I'm wondering how many of those are people who have a conscience and are repulsed by what they have seen in the West Bank and Gaza. Perhaps I'm incorrect about that.

Miko Peled:

I don't know. The few encounters that I've had with Israelis in the US over the years, the vast majority support Israel, support Israel's actions. It's interesting that you mentioned that because I an email from someone who is representing a group of alumni of Jewish Day Schools. These are Zionist schools all over countries where they indoctrinate the worst Zionism: secular Zionism. And they are now appalled by the indoctrination to serve in the IDF. And a very high percentage of these students grew up, went to Israel, joined the IDF, and took part in APEC events and so on. And now they're looking back and they're

reflecting and they're feeling a sense of anger that they were put through this and lied through their entire lives about this.

So that's an interesting development. And if that grows, then that might be a game changer because these are the most loyal American Jews. The most loyal to Israel. But by and large, Israelis that I meet, with few exceptions, support Israel and they're here for whatever reasons people come to America: They're not unique, they're not necessarily here because they were fed up or they were angry, or they were dissenters in any way, shape, or form. Around DC and Maryland, there are many Israelis. Sometimes you'll sit in a coffee shop or go somewhere, you hear the conversations, and there's no lack of support for Israel among these Israelis as far as I can see.

Chris Hedges:

Let's talk about the armies. You were in the Special Forces elite unit. Talk about that indoctrination. I remember visiting Auschwitz a few years ago, and there were Israeli groups and people were flying Israeli flags. But speak about that form of indoctrination and it's link, in particular, to the Holocaust.

Miko Peled:

The myth is that Israel is a response to the Holocaust. And that the IDF is a response to the Holocaust; We must be strong, we must be willing to fight, we must always have a gun in one hand or a weapon in one hand so that this will never happen again. And what's interesting is, when you talk to Holocaust survivors who are not indoctrinated, who did not get pulled into Zionism — Which there are very, very many — They'll say the notion that a militarized state is somehow the answer to the Holocaust is absurd because the answer to the Holocaust is tolerance and education and humanity, not violence and racism. But nobody wants to ruin a good myth with the actual facts. So that's the story.

The story is because of Auschwitz, we represent all those that were killed, perished by the Nazis and so on, and therefore we need to be strong. And the Israeli flag represents them, and the Israeli military represents them. It's absurd,

it's absolute madness. I went to serve in the army willingly, as most young Israelis do. In my environment, refusing or not going was not heard of, although there were some voices in the wilderness that were refusing and questioning the morality. But I never did. Nobody around me ever did until I began the training and you began patrolling. I remember — You and I may have talked about this once — We were an infantry unit, a commando infantry unit. And suddenly we were given batons and these plastic handcuffs and were told to patrol in Ramallah.

And I'm going, what the hell's going on? What are we doing here? And then we're told if anybody looks at you funny, you break every bone in their body. And I thought, everybody's going to look at us, we're commandos while marching through a city. Who's not going to look at us? I was behind. I didn't realize that everybody already understood that this is how it is, this is how it's supposed to be. I thought, wait, this is wrong. Why are we doing this? We're supposed to be the good guys here.

And then there was the Lebanon invasion of '82 and so on. So that broke that in my mind, that was a serious crack in the wall of belief and the wall of patriotism that was in me. But this whole notion that somehow being violent and militaristic and racist and being conquerors is somehow a response to the horrors of the Holocaust is absolute madness. But when you're in it nobody around you is asking questions. You don't ask questions either, unless you're willing to stand out and be smacked on the head.

Chris Hedges:

Within the military, within the IDF, how did they speak about Palestinians and Arabs?

Miko Peled:

The discourse, the hatred, the racism, is horrifying. First of all, they're the animals. They're nothing. It's a joke, you see, it's horrifying. They think it's funny to stop people and ask them for their ID and to chase them and to chase kids and

to shoot. It all seems like entertainment, you know? I never heard that discourse until I was in it. Then afterwards, when I would meet Israelis who served, even here in the US, the way they joked around about what they did in the West Bank, the way they joked around about killing or stopping people or making them take their clothes off and dance naked, it's entertainment.

They think it's funny. They don't see that there's a problem here because the racism is so ingrained from such a young age that it's almost organic. And I don't think it's surprising, I think when you have a racist society, and you have a racist education system that is so methodical, that's what you get. And the racism doesn't stop with Palestinians or with Arabs; It goes on to the Black people, it goes on to people of color, it goes to Jews or Israelis who come from other countries who are dark skinned, for some reason. The racism crosses all these boundaries and it's completely part of the culture.

Chris Hedges:

You have very little criticism of the IDF, almost none within the Israeli press, although there is quite a bit of criticism right now, of Netanyahu and his mismanagement and his corruption. Talk a little bit about the deification of the IDF within the public discourse and mainstream media and what that means for what's happening in Gaza.

Miko Peled:

Well, the military is above the law. It's above reproach, except from time to time. So after the '73 war, there was an investigation. And now there has been, just earlier this week, there was, in the cabinet meeting, the cabinet meets every Sunday. And the army chief of staff was there and he was, apparently, this was leaked from the meeting, a cabinet meeting. It was leaked that some of the more right-wing partners, it's funny to say right-wing partners because they're all this right-wing lunacy in the Israeli cabinet. But the more right-wing settlers that are in the cabinet were attacking the army, were attacking the chief of staff because I guess he decided to start an inquiry because there was a, it was catastrophic when the Palestinian fighters came in from Gaza, there was nobody home. They

took over half of their country back. They took twenty-two Israeli settlements and cities.

They took over the army base of the Gaza brigade, which is supposed to defend the country from exactly this happening. And there was nobody in the, they took over the base. So he began, I guess, or he initiated an internal inquiry within the army, and they're criticizing him. And what you see in the Israeli press is two very interesting things. One is, yes, there was this, something went horribly wrong and we need to find out why, but we should wait because we shouldn't do it during wartime. We shouldn't criticize the army during wartime. We shouldn't make the soldiers feel like they have to hold back because if they need to shoot, they should be allowed to shoot. And the other thing we see is that politically, everybody is eating each other up. I mean, they're killing each other politically in the press. So of course, everybody that's against Netanyahu and wants to see it is attacking him.

His people are attacking the others for attacking the government. I mean, there's this complete, it seems like there's this paralysis as a result of this infighting that is definitely affecting the functionality of the state as a state. Israelis are not living in the country, Israel is not the state that it was prior to October 7th, it was paralyzed for several weeks, and now it's still paralyzed in many ways. You've got missiles coming from the north, you've got missiles coming from the south. You've got very large numbers of Israeli soldiers being killed and thousands being injured and the war, and it's not ending. They're not able to defeat the Palestinians in Gaza, the armed resistance and so on.

So all of this is taking place, and you read the Israeli press and it's just like this cesspool that's bubbling and bubbling and bubbling, and everybody's attacking everybody else. And the army, like you said, it's true, they are above reproach mostly, but from time to time, like I said, this particular time, the settlers are very angry because, also another reason is because I guess the chief of staff, the military decided to pull back some of the ground troops, understandably, since they're being hit so hard. And I remember that happening before when the army

pulled back out of Gaza, they were being attacked for stopping the killing, for not continuing these mass killings of Palestinians.

Chris Hedges:

Well, you had what? 70 fatalities in the Golani Brigade, I think. And they were pulled back. This is a very elite unit.

Miko Peled:

Yeah, it's very interesting because many of the casualties are high-ranking officers. You have colonels, lieutenant colonels, very high-ranking commanders within Israeli special forces are being killed. And they're usually killed in big bunches, like you say, in big bunches because they'll be in an armored personnel carrier or they'll be marching together. And in Jenin, just recently also a few days ago, they blew up a military vehicle and killed a bunch of soldiers. So Israelis are, I think, scratching their heads, not knowing what the hell is going on and what to do, because number one, they were not protected as they thought they were.

And I'm sure you know this, the Israeli settlements, the kibbutzim, the cities in the south that border Gaza, [inaudible 00:25:59], they enjoy some of the highest standards of living among Israelis. It's a beautiful lifestyle. It's warm, it's lovely. Agriculture is, and I don't think it ever occurred to them that Palestinians would dare to come out of Gaza fighting and succeeding the way they did. And that the army, I mean the army was bankrupt. It was gone, the intelligence apparatus, bankrupt, nothing worked. And it is reminiscent of what happened in 1973, I mean, this is far worse, but it is reminiscent. And I don't think it's a coincidence that October 7th attacks were exactly 50 years and one day after the 1973 October war began, and the whole system collapsed. So that's what we're seeing right now.

Chris Hedges:

How do you read what's happening in Gaza, militarily?

Miko Peled:

Well, clearly the Palestinians are able to hold on and kill many Israelis. And even though the Israelis have the firepower and they've got the logistics, obviously they've got supply chains are not a problem. Whereas Palestinians, I don't know where they're getting supplies. I don't know where they're getting food even to continue fighting. They're obviously putting up a fierce resistance. I don't think that militarily, there's a strategy here. I mean, this is revenge. This is just, Israel was humiliated, the army was humiliated, and they needed to take it out on somebody.

So they found the weakest victims they could lay their hands on, and these are the Palestinian civilians in Gaza. And so they're killing them by the tens of thousands. I don't think anybody believes in such a thing as getting rid of Hamas. I don't think anybody really believes that that's possible. I don't believe anybody takes seriously or actually believes that you can take too many people out of Gaza and spread them around the world and into other places, even though that's what they're saying. But as long as Israel is allowed to kill, and as long as the supply chain isn't interrupted, they're going to continue to kill.

Chris Hedges:

And they're also, of course, creating a humanitarian crisis. So it's not just the bombs and the shells, but it's now starvation. Diarrhea is an epidemic, sanitation is broken. I'm wondering at what point this humanitarian crisis becomes so pronounced that really the choice is you leave or you die.

Miko Peled:

That's always the big question for Palestinians. And the sad thing is that Palestinians are always being placed in these situations where they have to make that choice. It's the worst form of injustice. And you know this, you've been in war zones. I mean, we don't know how many bodies are buried under the rubble and what that's going to bring up. And there are hundreds of thousands now, like you said, that are suffering from all kinds of diseases as a result of this environmental catastrophe. And you remember, what was it? 2016 or something, 2017, the UN came out with a report that by 2020, Gaza would be uninhabitable. I

don't think the Gaza Strip has ever been inhabitable. It's been a humanitarian disaster since it was created in the early forties, late forties, early fifties. Because they suddenly threw all these refugees there with no infrastructure and that was it, and then began killing them.

So it's a question, and I was talking to some people the other day, as Americans, as taxpayers, wouldn't we want the Sixth Fleet, which is in the Mediterranean, the US Navy's Sixth Fleet, to aid the Palestinians? To provide them support? To create a no-fly zone over these innocent people that are being massacred? I mean, as Americans, isn't that the natural, shouldn't that be the natural ask? The natural desire to demand our politicians to use, because American naval vessels have been used for humanitarian causes before. Why aren't they supporting the Palestinians? Why aren't they providing them aid? Why aren't they helping them rebuild? Why are American tax dollars going to continue this genocide rather than stop it and aid the victims?

I think these are questions Americans need to ask themselves because it makes absolutely no sense. It is absolute madness that people are allowing their government to support a genocide that's not even done in secret. It's not even done in hiding it. It's on prime time. Everybody sees it. Everybody knows what's going on. And again, for some strange reason, Americans are allowing their military and their government to aid the genocide. And there's no question, I mean, there's no question that it's genocide. I mean, the definition of the crime of genocide is so absolutely clear, anybody can look it up and compare it to what's been going on in Palestine. So that to me is really the greatest questions. Why aren't Americans demanding that the US support the Palestinians?

Chris Hedges:

Well, according to opinion polls, most Americans want a ceasefire. But the Congress is bought and paid for by the Israel lobby. Biden is one of the largest recipients of aid or campaign financing from the Israel lobby. And this is true within both parties. I mean, Chuck Schumer was at the rally saying, no ceasefire.

Miko Peled:

Which is odd. I mean, a ceasefire, I mean, I think ceasefire is a very small ask, and I don't know why Palestinians, we always ask for the bare minimum for Palestinians. But let's talk about ceasefire. I mean, Israeli soldiers are being killed as well in very large numbers. How has ceasefire suddenly become an anti-Israeli demand? But I think that it's a very small ask. I don't know how it was or where it was that this idea of demanding just a ceasefire came up because that is really not a serious demand. Ceasefire gets violated by Israel anyway, within 24-48 hours. I mean, you know that, historically Israel always violated ceasefires. What is required here are severe sanctions, a no-fly zone, immediate aid to the Palestinians, and stopping this and providing guarantees for the safety and security of Palestinians forever moving forward so this can never happen again.

That's what really needs to be the ask. At this point, after having sacrificed so much, after having shown such, what I believe is immense courage, Palestinians deserve everything. We as people of conscience need to demand not to ceasefire, we need to demand a dismantling of the apartheid state and a full stop and end absolute end to the genocide and guarantees put in place that Palestinian kids will be safe. I mean, I was talking to Issa Amro earlier in Hebron. I mean, it's ridiculous when nobody even talks about what happens in the West Bank. Friends of mine who are Palestinian citizens of Israel, nobody dares to leave the house, nobody dares to text. They're afraid to walk down the streets. Their safety is not guaranteed by anyone.

Palestinian safety and security is left to the whims of any Israeli, and that should be the conversation right now, after such horrendous violence. That needs to be the demand, that needs to be the ask when we go to protests, when we make these demands, ceasefire, and even that, Israel is not willing. And like you said, these [inaudible 00:33:15] political supporters of Israel here in America are not willing to entertain a ceasefire. I believe it's really a crazy part of history that we're experiencing right now, and I think it's a watershed moment. I think October 7th created an opportunity to end this for good, to end the suffering of Palestinians, the oppression, and the genocide for good. And if we don't take advantage, again, we being people of conscience, if we don't take advantage of this now and bring it to an end, this will be, we will regret this for generations.

Chris Hedges:

The Netanyahu government is talking about this assault on Gaza, this genocide continuing for months. There are strikes, have been strikes against, now Hezbollah leaders. What concerns you? I mean, how could this all go terribly wrong?

Miko Peled:

I mean, it's already gone terribly wrong because of death and destruction of so many innocent lives is, I don't even know that there's a word for it. It's beyond horrifying. I think that, I think Netanyahu is relying on the restraint of Hezbollah and the restraint of Iran and the restraint, of course, the Arab governments have all been neutralized either through destruct, being destroyed or through normalization. So he's relying on that, and he knows that he can keep triggering, he can keep bombing Lebanon, bombing Syria, instigating all of these things and it won't turn into an all-out war. Because at the end of the day, even though the Hezbollah fighters have shown, Lebanese fighters and Hezbollah and the Palestinian fighters have shown that they're superior as fighters, they don't have the supply chains, they don't have the warplanes, they don't have the tanks. So more and more civilians are going to be hurt.

So I don't think it's going to turn into a regional war by any stretch of the imagination. And so Netanyahu is betting on that, and that's why he's allowing this to go on. And for him, this is a win-win. I mean, there's no way that he can be unseated by anybody that's around him. There's really no opposition. And as long as this goes on, as long as everybody's in a state of crisis, he can continue to sit in the Prime Minister's seat, which for him is the end all and be all of everything. And look, the world is supporting, the world, as governments of the world, I should say.

I do interviews with African TV stations, Indian TV stations, Europeans, everybody is supporting Israel. Everybody listens to what I have to say, and they think I am a lunatic for supporting terrorism or whatever it is they, however it is that they frame it. But I don't think anything good, I don't see this ending unless

there is massive pressure by people of conscience on their governments to force change, to force sanctions, to force the end of the genocide and the end of the apartheid state.

Chris Hedges:

I want to talk about the shift within Zionism itself from the dominance of a secular leadership to, we see it of course in the government of Netanyahu, the rise of a religious Zionism, which is also true now within the IDF. And I wondered if you could talk about the consequences of that?

Miko Peled:

Sure. So originally, traditionally, historically, Zionism and Judaism were at odds. And even to this day, as you know, ultra-orthodox Jews reject Zionism and reject Israel by and large. But after 1967, there was this new creation of the Zionist religious movement. And these are the settlers who went to the West Bank and they became the new pioneers. And they are today, they make up a large portion of the officers and those who joined the special forces and so on. And in the past, in the army, the unofficial policy was that these guys, they should not be allowed to advance. The current chief of staff comes from that world, which is a huge change. And there are several generals, and of course commanders, high-ranking commanders and so on who come from that world. And the reason that it was the unofficial policy that these guys should not be promoted was that it's an incredibly toxic combination, this messianic form of Judaism, which is really an aberration.

It's not Judaism at all, with this nationalist fanaticism. This combination is toxic and look what it created. It created some of the worst racists, some of the most violent thugs that we've seen, certainly in the short history of the state of Israel, although I don't know that they're any less violent than the generation of Zionists of my father who are secular. But this was a big concern in the past but now they're everywhere and of course, look at its current government. They hold the finance ministry, they hold the national security ministry, certainly in the military they're everywhere. And they hold many sub-cabinet, and they're heads

of committees in the Knesset and so on. And they've done their work. I mean, they worked very hard to get to where they are today, which is where they call the shots. And they are really, Netanyahu's guaranteed to remain in power.

They're his support group. That's why you could have had, as we had earlier this year, hundreds of thousands of Israelis protesting in the streets and it didn't affect him because he has his block in the Knesset that will never leave him as long as he allows them to play their game. And this is what's happening. So in terms of violence and the actual facts on the ground, I don't think these guys are any worse again than my parents' generation who were young Zionists and zealots at the time and committed the 1948 Nakba and ran the country for the first and operated the apartheid state for the first few decades. But it's definitely a new form of fanaticism being that it is religious as well as fascist. So it's very toxic. And I think they have a stomach, more of a stomach for killing civilians than we've ever seen before, even for Israelis. I mean, this is new, this is, these numbers are just beyond, these numbers are beyond belief, even for Israel.

Chris Hedges:

I'm wondering if this religious Zionism probably has its profoundest effect within Israel, in terms of shutting down dissidents, civil liberties, this kind of stuff.

Miko Peled:

Well, Israelis love them. Israelis love these guys because they're religious, but they dress like us. They don't look like the old Jews with the big beards and everything. They're kind of cool. They wear jeans. And the reason I say this is because one of the things, one of their objectives is to take over Al-Aqsa and build a Jewish temple. They're destroying Al-Aqsa and so they conduct these tours. And you may know this, in the old city of Jerusalem, there's a particular path that you take from where the western wall is up to Al-Aqsa, which is open for non-Muslims. And so they hold tours and there's several odd times throughout the day, and I've taken some of these tours, just to see what it's about, what these guys do, you know?

These are basically prayer tours. And they've taken, hundreds of thousands of Israelis go on these tours. And these are Israelis who are not religious at all. These are secular people. I mean, I see the people that go on the tours and you go up that bridge, just to give you an idea of what this is about. You go up on that bridge and then you wait until the tour starts because you have to go in a group. And there's a massive model of the new temple, of the Jewish temple that is going to be built there. And then you have a huge group of armed police.

They're not soldiers, they're police, but dressed like, completely militarized that accompany the tour all around. And of course, Muslim Palestinians are not allowed, they accompany the tour all around. And they stop and they pray and they stop and they pray and they stop and pray at various places, the whole thing takes maybe an hour. But the interesting thing is that the people that go on these tours are secular Israelis. And then as I was doing this, I was remembering it, even as a kid growing up completely secular, we would sing songs about the day that we build a temple.

Why did we sing songs about building a temple? Because I think it went beyond our religious significance, and it became a national significance. And there's no question in my mind that Netanyahu, when secular Israelis are, would love to see this idea of destroying Al-Aqsa and having a Jewish temple there. It's a sign that we're back, King David is back. And the connection, even though it has nothing to do with history and there's no truth in it, the connection that we are descendants of King David is something Israelis really love. That's really what this is about so the relationship between the settlers, the so-called settlers, that's what they're called in Israeli jargon. They're called the settlers, and regular secular Israelis is an interesting one because on the one hand, they're looked down upon because they're religious, but on the other hand, they're kind of cool religious. So there is an affinity.

Chris Hedges:

Great. That was Miko Peled, author of *The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine* and *Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation* Five. I want to thank the Real News Network and its production team, Cameron Granandino,

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<https://www.unz.com/article/the-idfs-war-crimes-are-a-perfect-reflection-of-israeli-society/>